1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Bison Horn Maria

dance, which makes everyone laugh, while all the mediums of neighbouring villages attend, and, possessed by their godlings, leap wildly to and fro, carrying bunches of *saja* leaves in their hands or holding them over their matted hair, to the general merriment. The chief wedding dance is the bison dance, every male turning at intervals in his paces to smile and 'glad-eye' the next dancer, and each then pretending to butt the other with his bison-horns; in another figure they similarly mimic two cocks fighting. The greatest sign of skill is to be able to impale on the tip of the horns a piece of grass twisted into a ring and thrown on the ground; the dancer may before this pretend to be a young and frisky bull, butting at wisps of grass or trees, or hurling them into the air to toss them on his horns. I have seen a dancer pick a small finger ring off the ground on the tip of his horns. As among the Hill Marias, and indeed most Central Provinces Gonds, there is always a comic and obscene element; men wearing black gourd masks with thick hair and beards of black bear or goat fur, and carrying clubs, nets and dummy guns, rush in and out amongst the dancers, making obscenely suggestive gestures with their clubs at the dancing or onlooking girls, and provoking roars of laughter.

There is generally a pause for *landa* or *mahua* spirit sooner or later, after which the girls sometimes, before resuming the dance, sit in a bunch swaying from their hips and singing short catchy refrains, with either frankly sexual meaning or no meaning at all; and often the lads opposite make the whole company laugh by imitating them in falsetto.

The dancing and singing, it need hardly be said, lead on frequently to love-making, couples retiring into the darkness, or else starting an affair ending in experimental union and perhaps, later, in matrimony.

E. Other Amusements

The Bison-horn Marias' favourite pastime of cock-fighting has already been described (see page 162 above). Small wooden toys are made for the children, very crude representations of tigers or other animals; and a pathetic sight at the graves of children are these toys left there for the *hanal*[1] of the children to play with. I have never found any Marias making string figures; and they have shown no interest in attempts to demonstrate them. The Murias and Bhattras have innumerable games in which all the village youth takes part in the cold weather and spring nights, many of which

[1] Literally the 'Gone', used of the spirits of the dead.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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involve considerable physical exertion and have proved excellent material for the physical training of the boys in the State schools; at the Muria *gotul* dormitories these games often take the place of dancing and singing. But the only Hill Maria villages which have anything of the kind appear to be those of the Padalibhum and Tapalibhum *parganas* which are gradually adopting the dormitory organization of their Muria neighbours; and some Bison-horn villages on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country are beginning to copy the Murias and Bhattras. Early to bed is the rule for old and young in Maria villages, and the child from the beginning learns to copy his father's activities; his playthings soon become small bows and arrows, fishing-rods and snares, skill in the use of which will make him an asset to the community. Stilt-walking in the early monsoon, occasional use of bull-roarers and bamboo drums, crude ornamentation of the walls of houses or the carving of ornamental combs and beadwork seem to be the only other recreations of Hill Maria youth.

F. Reckoning Time

The Hill Maria names for the months have already been given (page 129), and it has been said that in general the Bison-horn Marias know and use the local Hindu names. They call a month *lenj*, the word used for the moon; but all, even Bison-horn Marias, have to think hard before they can tell you what month it is, and there may be a certain amount of argument on the point. Throughout Bastar there is something of this uncertainty; the local Hindu months are named after festivals such as Goncha, Dasehra and Diwali; and the Bastaria, even if he adopts these, does not like to observe them on the same date in every village, because that would deprive him of the chance of taking part in the celebrations at the surrounding villages.

Though the Bison-horn Maria knows the Hindu names for the days of the week, and uses them in his conversation, the Hill Maria does not. If word comes to a Hill Maria headman that in thirteen days' time he and his villagers have to go to the tahsil court, or to work on the annual road repairs, he will make a tally string with thirteen knots and undo one every day, leaving to keep the appointment on the morning of the last knot. These tally strings are also kept by those who attend markets at fairly regular intervals; and in a murder case, of which the villagers had decided to suppress or postpone informing the police because it was the harvest season, the wife of the murdered man, determined to get justice, had kept a tally string on which she tied a fresh knot every

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Bison-horn Maria girls playing games at Mokhpal [Verrier Elwin

[End Plate M]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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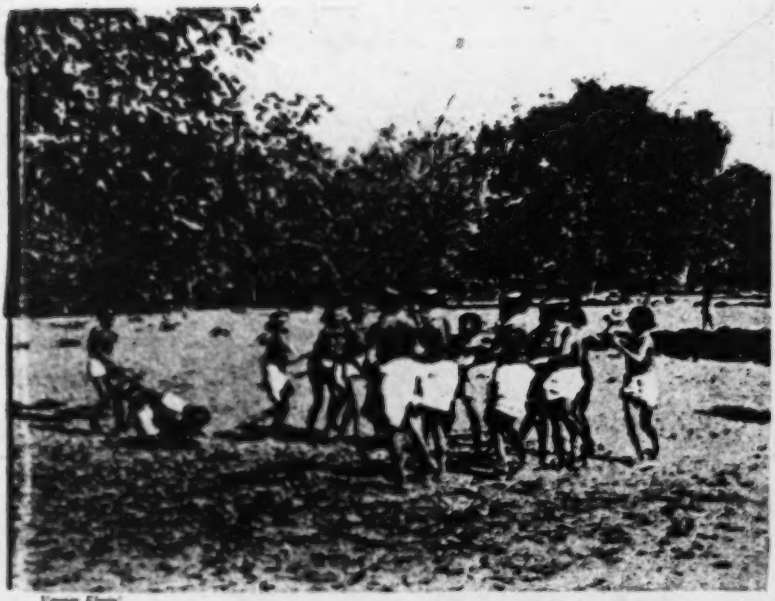

Verrier Elwin

Bison-horn Maria girls playing games at Mokhpal

[End Plate O]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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Plate CXXXII

The Mogral Karsana, or Crocodile game

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Wrestling at Koilibera

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